

News from Tonga

The Hoeft family at St. Peter's are immigrants from Tonga. After news broke of the recent earthquake and tsunami in Tonga, our congregation was praying fervently for the safety of those affected by these natural disasters.

Fr. Finefonua (Fine) Hoeft, who is also an Anglican priest from Tonga licensed in our Diocese, was without news from his family and friends in Tonga for several days. He recently got news that his family is safe. Although his home island was affected by the tsunami, the waters did not reach populated areas.

The Hoefts are from the community of Foa on Ha'apai Island in Tonga. Although there were no deaths on the island, they do have a lack of clean drinking water due to acid rain and ash fall from the volcano. The internet cable connecting Tonga to the rest of the world was severed by the volcano so they are limited to communication by slow, unreliable, and expensive satellite phones.

Efforts are ongoing to repair the internet cable. The Tongan government is working with Australia and New Zealand to provide drinking water to the islands, as well as temporary housing for those who need it.

Tourism from abroad is a major part of the Tongan economy and the country has been greatly affected by the collapse of the tourism industry during this global pandemic. The volcano and tsunami have made an already challenging situation worse. Fine has promised to let me know when he finds out how we can help. Please join us in praying for the people of Tonga as they rebuild their lives and their communities.

Faithfully,

The Rev. Robert Hill, Rector
St Peter's Episcopal Church, Louisville

